



Winter 2-7-2008

## Illinois Wesleyan Alumna Fulfills Her Artistic Dreams

Sehaj Sethi

*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Sethi, Sehaj, "Illinois Wesleyan Alumna Fulfills Her Artistic Dreams" (2008). *News and Events*. 5133.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/5133>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

February 7, 2008

**Contact:** Sehaj Sethi, (309) 556-3181

## Illinois Wesleyan Alumna Fulfills Her Artistic Dreams

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Amanda “Gwydhar” Bratton, a 2004 Illinois Wesleyan graduate, is beginning to make a name for herself in the Chicago film community. With her new film *The Persephone Project* in its finishing stages, Bratton hopes to progress into a promising future as a director and producer.

An inherent interest in art brought Bratton to Illinois Wesleyan University as an art major. She quickly learned that she was able to foster her curiosity for cinema while attending the University, and made a film for an independent research project titled *Anti-Hero*. Illinois Wesleyan graduates Liz Schroeder, class of 2006, and Daniel Vendt, class of 2005, assisted Bratton with the movie. She recently collaborated again with both for *The Persephone Project*, with Schroeder acting as costume designer and Vendt composing the original score.

The film’s story revolves around the Greek myth of Persephone, who was captured by Hades and made goddess of the underworld until she was rescued. Using an experimental interpretation of the myth, the film focuses on a visual representation of the story. Each character wears a mask that was specifically designed and handmade for the film.

The production company behind the film is Blue Damen Pictures, founded and operated by Bratton. The organization, she explains, is a nonprofit Chicago-based ensemble of individuals dedicated to promoting and nurturing up-and-coming talent within the film community. “Our mission statement is to give anyone interested in learning or getting involved with filmmaking the opportunity to work hands-on on a film,” she said. Bratton felt that to really establish herself as a player within the film community, she would have to create her own production company so people would take

notice. While *The Persephone Project* will be the first major short film Blue Damen Pictures has produced, they have created several smaller shorts, such as *Man Jam*, *Big Brother* and *Single's Awareness Day*.

Since she was twelve, Bratton has known filmmaking would be a large part of her career, but only within the last few years has she completely devoted herself to it. "It's always been a straight line in my life, but I've always been weaving back and forth across it," said Bratton. "I always knew I wanted to make films, but for a long time I wasn't sure how."

As a young child, Bratton said she was instantly drawn to art. Having been forbidden to turn the television on early in the morning, she would create pictures of Sesame Street and tape them to the TV screen, content to "watch" those instead. As she grew, she found herself more and more interested in film and visual media as a form of storytelling. "I am an artist primarily," she said, "but I'm not so much interested in art as the form itself, but rather in the stories it can tell."

These days Bratton's passion for art is focused through various mediums. She is currently working on several projects, including a series of angel illustrations, each signifying a letter of the alphabet. "With each letter I tried to find an angel that had a character, like Michael, or a theme, like Death, that I wanted to explore," she said.

Not confined to one form, Bratton is also in the process of creating several Web comics and graphic novels: *Murdermouth*, *Dogtrial*, *The Werewif* and *The Adomnan Convergence*. She has also dabbled in creating mosaics using magazine clippings, as well as costume design, puppetry and mask making.

While Bratton has always fostered an interest in film, she considers *Anti-Hero* her first attempt at real filmmaking, and was pleased to see that the methods she used were similar to those used in the industry. Bratton was able to experience this firsthand as a production assistant on the set of the film *Disappearances*, directed by Jay Craven, released in 2006. "I was surprised that the techniques I used in my independent project were applied on an actual film set."

After all of her experiences, Bratton has come to the conclusion that in a profession with so many hardships, the best course of action is simply that: action. Jack Vettriano, a celebrated Scottish painter and great inspiration to Bratton, once told her,

“It’s been my experience that those that can, do.” She explains that his advice truly affected her. “If you are meant to be an artist it is because you do art, and, alternatively, if you are meant to be a filmmaker, you will make films.”

To learn more about Bratton and to view her work, visit her Web site at [www.gwydhar.com](http://www.gwydhar.com). For additional information regarding upcoming short films visit the Blue Damen Pictures Web site at [www.bluedamen.com](http://www.bluedamen.com).

## **Web Only Captions for “Illinois Wesleyan Alumna Fulfills Her Artistic Dreams”**

Drawing: In Bratton’s Angels project, Earth stands for “E”. The illustration presents an angel creating the earth from a quilt, constantly stitching pieces together.

Photograph: Actors Klara Dvorak (left) and Carole McCurdy (right) act out a scene from Bratton’s new film *The Persephone Project*.